Time Clauses in English

Adverbial clauses of time
Time clauses answer the question: \textit{When}\? and can be introduced by the following conjunctions:

- when
- after
- as
- as long as
- as soon as
- before
- hardly \ldots when
- by the time (that)
- directly
- during the time (that)

- immediately
- the moment (that)
- now (that)
- once
- since
- until / till
- when
- whenever
- while
Remember!

We do not use a future form, or a conditional tense, in a time clause.
Study the following examples. Pay attention to the tense used after the words in red.

I will phone you **when** I get home from work.

**Before** I go, I'd like to talk to you.

I'm going to swim a lot **while** I'm on holiday.

We'll go out **when** it stops snowing.

What do you want to be **when** you grow up?

I look after the children **while** she goes to Paris.

**As soon as** we get the tickets, we'll send them to you.

Let me stay here **till** he comes to bed.
The present perfect tense can be used after the following words: when, after, until, as soon as. If you use the present perfect, one action must be completed before the other!

**When I've called** Tom, we can have supper.
( First I will call Tom and *after that* we can have supper. )

**When you've had your supper**, come and see me.
( You cannot say: When you will have had your supper. )

He won't be getting married **until he've saved enough money**.
Do not use present perfect if the two actions happen together!

When I call Tom, I'll ask him about the journey.  (We cannot say: When I've called)
We can use either the present simple or the present perfect in the following situations.

I'll come as soon as I finish. or
I'll come as soon as I've finished.

You'll feel better after you have something to eat. or
You'll feel better after you've had something to eat.
We use a comma when the adverbial clause comes first:

- I felt very tired when I got up this morning.
- After he got a new job, he changed completely.
- He broke his leg as he was playing football.
- Once you've seen an elephant, you've seen them all.
- We'll go out when it stops raining.
- When you are in Paris, come and see me.
- What do you want to be when you grow up.
When the time clause refers to the future we normally use

the simple present where we might expect the future
the present perfect where we might expect the future perfect

after the following words:

after as soon as before by the time directly
immediately the moment till until when
Once we have built the house, we can move in.

Now that we have built the house, we can move in.
We use 'when', 'whenever', 'every time' or 'each time' if we want to say that something always happened or happens in particular circumstances.

When he talks about politics, he does sound like a fanatic.
Whenever he had a cold, he drank a lot of juice.
Every time I go to the dentist, I panic.
We do not normally use the future time in time clauses, although *will* can be used after *when* in noun clauses.

The boss wants to know *when* we *will* be placing an order?
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The exercises on Time Clauses:
  time clauses